



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES  
Office of Communications**



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## **Protection From New Strain of Flu to be in '03 Vaccine**

**This year's late season flu cases hit with newly-discovered strain**

LOS ANGELES –Los Angeles County residents – primarily elementary and middle school children – experienced a late season surge in flu cases this past March and April. The source of this Type B influenza has now been identified as a novel strain of influenza previously believed to be limited to Southeast Asia. The 2001 – 02 vaccine did not afford sufficient protection against this new strain. However, thanks in part to investigation efforts by Los Angeles County epidemiologists, the 2002 – 03 vaccine will be adapted to provide protection against this strain.

“We collected and identified samples of the late spring flu cases and sent them to the California Department of Health Services,” said David Dassey, M.D. M.P.H., Deputy Director of the Acute Communicable Disease Control Unit. “The state confirmed they were a new strain recently identified as influenza B/Hong Kong/330/2001.”

The flu shot for next winter will be available in October or November of this year. The health department urges all residents who are at high risk for complications of the flu to be immunized when the vaccine becomes available.

“This is another reason why getting an annual flu shot is so important,” said Dr. Dassey. “The vaccine is altered year after year based on circulating strains to protect against the strains expected to circulate the following flu season.”

Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 3,800 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$465 million.

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